

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks. Prior to entry of this response, Claims 1-10, 14-16, and 19-37 were pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 7, 11, 14, 17, 19, 26, 31, and 33 are independent. In the Final Office Action dated September 18, 2006, Claims 11 and 17 were objected to, Claims 1-2, 4-7, 9-10, 19-22, 25-26, 28-30, and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), and Claims 3, 8, 14, 16, 23-24, 27, 31-32, 34-35, and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Claim 36 was objected to, but was deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims and Claim 15 was allowed. Following this response, Claims 7-10, 15-16, and 37 remain in this application, Claims 1-6, 14, and 19-36 being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants hereby address the Examiner's rejections in turn.

I. **Interview Summary**

Applicants thank Examiner Wilson for the courtesy of a telephone interview on October 17, 2006, requested by the undersigned to discuss the rejection of the current claims. While no agreement was made, the Examiner stated that she would more than likely enter this Amendment After Final placing the application in condition for allowance.

II. **Allowance of Claims**

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner pass Claim 15 to issue.

III. Objection to the Claims

In the Final Office Action dated September 18, 2006, the Examiner objected to Claims 11 and 17. Claims 11 and 17 were canceled in the last Amendment and are not currently present. Applicants respectfully submit that this objection is moot.

IV. Rejection of the Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

In the Final Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-2, 4-7, 9-10, 19-22, 25-26, 28-30, and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), and Claims 3, 8, 14, 16, 23-24, 27, 31-32, 34-35, and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Claim 7 has been amended to include the allowed subject matter from allowed dependent Claim 36. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendment overcomes this rejection to Claim 7 and adds no new matter.

Dependent Claims 8-10 are also allowable at least for the reasons described above regarding independent Claim 7, and by virtue of their dependency upon independent Claim 7. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection of dependent Claims 8-10.

Moreover, dependent Claim 16 has been amended to depend from allowed independent Claim 15. Accordingly, dependent Claims 16 and 37 are also allowable at least by virtue of their dependency upon allowed independent Claim 15. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection of dependent Claims 16 and 37.

V. Conclusion

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment After Final be entered by the Examiner, placing the claims in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully submit that the proposed amendments of the claims do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Finally, Applicants respectfully submit that the entry of the Amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims, as amended, are patentable over the cited references. The preceding arguments are based only on the arguments in the Official Action, and therefore do not address patentable aspects of the invention that were not addressed by the Examiner in the Official Action. The claims may include other elements that are not shown, taught, or suggested by the cited art. Accordingly, the preceding argument in favor of patentability is advanced without prejudice to other bases of patentability. Furthermore, the Final

Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Final Office Action.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this amendment and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 13-2725.

Respectfully submitted,
MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.

P.O. Box 2903
Minneapolis, MN 55402-0903
404.954.5066

Date: October 18, 2006

DKS:mdc



D. Kent Stier
Reg. No. 50,640

39262

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE